



Wait and See

Finding Peace in God's Pauses and Plans

Wendy Pope

What people are saying about ...

Wait and See

“Most of us have experienced the struggle of wanting something to happen immediately while waiting on God to unfold His plans. If you’re in that place now, *Wait and See* will show you you’re not alone! Wendy’s transparency from her own difficult wait will help take the sting, questioning, and anxiety out of your weary heart. Wendy’s book will help keep your faith strong when the wait makes you feel weak.”

Lysa TerKeurst, *New York Times* bestselling author and president of Proverbs 31 Ministries

“Like sweet balm to your soul, Wendy Pope guides you through waiting as if it is the nearest and only way to be in touch with your heavenly Father. If your dream or greatest desire is not yet fulfilled, this is required reading. I absolutely *loved* this book.”

Shari Braendel, president of Fashion Meets Faith and author of *Help Me, Jesus, I Have Nothing to Wear!*

“As a woman who winces when I’m asked to wait, I was encouraged and inspired from the first page of this book to the last! Wendy Pope has skillfully woven together a wealth of Scripture with relevant, real-life stories and powerful passages from the psalms of King David. *Wait and See* goes deep and wide, exposing our need for God and assuring us of His strength. What a comfort to know we never wait alone!”

Liz Curtis Higgs, bestselling author of *Bad Girls of the Bible*

“*Wait and See* is a welcomed equipping tool to help us find security in what can be uncertain times of *waiting*. Wendy builds from biblical truths and applies them to contemporary stories, including her own. By His grace, God has clearly called Wendy to this work by allowing her to live it out. I’m thankful for her faithfulness and willingness to *wait and see* His plan for this book.”

Chris Justice, senior pastor of Lee
Park Church, Monroe, NC

“I’ve grown quite familiar with life’s waiting places. Marriage. Parenting six times over. Frightening diagnoses. In every case, the waiting and not knowing turned out to be the most painful part, by far. But what if it doesn’t have to be? What if the waiting room became a sacred classroom? With a wealth of personal experience and the wisdom of a lover of God’s Word, Wendy Pope will help you turn your waiting place to the place of peace and growth in the safety of God’s sure presence.”

Michele Cushatt, author of *Undone*

“*Wait and See* is like a chocolate truffle—it must be savored, not devoured, to be fully appreciated. Wendy enables the reader to understand that waiting is not an obstacle to be overcome; rather it is a discipline to be embraced. She weaves sound biblical truths with human experiences to create a pathway for those struggling with the mysteries of waiting, offering practical steps to grasp the fullness of God’s purposes in our waits and even in our wilderness times.”

John Butler, pastor and chief financial officer of
the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina

From a Focus Group:

“Wendy Pope writes with honesty and vulnerability. Her message in *Wait and See* is one that is sure to resonate with many women. One truth Wendy shares that found its way to my heart was when God appears to be silent, lean closer and press in harder, but never believe He doesn’t see or hear your cries. Every woman will be challenged to see her pauses and plans through a different lens. Truly uplifting!”

Lynne Bauman, director of women at Walnut Hill Community Church and author of *A Heart to Know Him*

“I learned so many valuable lessons about being a woman who waits well from this book. Thank you, Wendy, for teaching me these principles and showing me how to better trust God and have confidence in His timing!”

Elizabeth LaPole

“A diligent steward of Scripture, Wendy accurately and carefully handles the Word of God as she leads us in the journey of faith and trust in the Lord during the waiting seasons of our lives. *Wait and See* encourages us to be quietly and actively patient, to be productive, and to abide in the Lord and deepen our relationship with Him while we wait.”

Sharon Sloan, author of *Serendipity*

“Until I read Wendy’s *Wait and See*, I really had no idea how to wait well. Wendy examines the waiting process and how to do it well with God at the center of it all. Even though waiting goes against this

fast-paced impatient world, Wendy shows us through Scripture and real-life applications the step-by-step action plan for getting ourselves battle ready. *Wait and See* is a life-changing book that will help you see the purpose in your wait. Don't wait to read it!"

Nicole Wells

"Right from the beginning of *Wait and See*, I was captivated by Wendy's transparency and humility. Her vulnerability and insight into God's Word allowed me to examine areas in my life where I have replaced worshipping God with the object of my wait. Wendy's love for God and His Word becomes contagious as you read through *Wait and See*, and it made me want to dive deeper into the Bible. I have no doubt that *Wait and See* will definitely become one of those books you read and reread throughout your Christian walk, and it will be the one you will to recommend to others."

Linda Schoch

"In a culture of instant access and instant gratification, we have lost the ability to appreciate *the wait*. How often do we miss out on the present because we are so focused on the future? Wendy has found the key to learning how to wait well, to trust God's timing, and to find peace in the unknown. *Wait and See* came at the perfect time in my life and blessed me with the ability to learn and grow closer to the Lord instead of missing out on the blessing of my own wait."

Shelley Summerville



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Wendy Pope

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transforming lives together

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the identities of the persons involved.

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The author has added italics to Scripture quotations for emphasis.

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*To my amazing family:
Scott, Blaire, and Griffin.
Thank you for waiting with me.*

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Foreword

It was October 2009, and after two long years of wading through endless paperwork, saying countless prayers, crying many tears, and wondering if our adoption would ever happen, we finally brought home our ten-month-old baby girl from Ethiopia.

Our long wait was over! And our new life together as a family of five was finally here.

A few weeks later, my mom called early one morning to tell us she couldn't breathe and needed someone to take her to the hospital. My husband rushed her to the emergency room, while I scrambled to get our kids taken care of. Later that morning, my mom was hospitalized with pulmonary embolisms.

In addition to blood clots in both lungs, Mom developed a kidney infection caused by a kidney stone so large it required surgery to remove it. When my mom was released from the hospital eight days later, she moved in with our family instead of going home.

A month later, my annual mammogram came back abnormal. I was immediately scheduled for two biopsies the week after Christmas

and referred to an oncologist for genetic testing because of my family's extensive history of breast cancer.

The same afternoon of my appointment, my brother called from Florida to say our dad had been to the doctor that day because of chest pains. Tests revealed severe blockage, and Dad was scheduled for emergency quadruple bypass heart surgery that week.

I had thought our long wait was over, when in reality I was walking into another season of waiting ...

Waiting to see what the future held for my mom.

Waiting to see if my dad would make it through open-heart surgery.

Waiting to see if my biopsies would indicate I had cancer.

While I waited on God to show me what to do, I wrote these words in my journal:

Lord, my heart is in a wobbly place, teetering between fear and faith. Jesus, please infuse my soul with courage to trust Your ways and Your timing.

Lord, I don't want cancer. I don't want to settle for believing it is my destiny just because it is in my history. The past doesn't define my future—You do. You are the One who knows the plans You have for me, plans to prosper me and not to harm me, plans to give me a future and a hope. Oh, Jesus, this is my hope: that You are good, that You are loving, that You are able and willing to heal and restore, to redeem and remake.

I stand at the foot of the cross knowing I must lay down my body before You. I want to be willing

to let You work in my life through whatever circumstances You allow. Like so many other times before, it is in my suffering I see and share in Your glory. And isn't that what I was made for? I want to be a reflection of Your glory, a representation of who You are. Father, make me a willing vessel to surrender and rest in You, no matter what. I pray You will keep my heart in perfect peace, because my mind is steadfast as I trust in You. No matter what tomorrow brings, may You find me faithfully available to lay it all down before You as a sacrificial offering of praise.

I wish I could tell you I prayed those words and lived them faithfully from that day forward. But I didn't. Yet when my trust wavered, I recognized my only hope was to return to this place of surrender, again and again. And when my biopsy results came back negative, I thanked God for that answer to prayer and the ways He was molding my heart through it all.

Waiting is inevitable. Waiting with hope and courage is optional.

If we want to wait well and experience all God has for us in the midst of our waiting, we have to be honest with Him about our fears and struggles. We also have to ask Jesus to give us eyes to see through a lens of hope and a heart molded by faith that He is working for our good and His glory.

Through the pages of *Wait and See*, my friend Wendy Pope will help you do just that. Chapter by chapter, she will help you look for God and find Him in the middle of your wait.

What I love about Wendy is that she doesn't just tell us to "be patient and trust God." She shows us how. With the wisdom and compassion of a trusted friend, Wendy walks with us each step of the way, guiding our hearts into a place of strength and perseverance as we learn to see God's handiwork, the evidence of His presence, and the gift of His peace that "waiting well" brings.

Renee Swope
Word-lover | Story-teller | Grace-needer
Author of *A Confident Heart*

Acknowledgments

To Renee: I don't know if this book would have been written had you not followed the Spirit's leading. You courageously spoke the words that changed the course of my writing pursuits. I am blessed by your foreword and honored to have you as part of my first published project. Love you, friend!

To the Wait and See Group: Cindy, Elizabeth, Jane, Karen, Linda, Lynne, Nicole, Sharon, Shelley, Susan, and Tracy. Y'all are simply the best! Your feedback, all of it, positive and polishing, was invaluable in the shaping of the book. I can never repay you for the time you sacrificed, so I pray God's greatest blessings on you and your families. Is this a good time to ask for your help with the next book?

To the Waiters: thank you, Ashley, Samantha, Diana, and Scott for sharing your wait and your struggles. Your transparency will bless and encourage everyone who reads *Wait and See*. Glynnis, C. T. and Becky, Heather, and Chad, your stories put the perfect finishing touch to chapter 9.

To my team at David C Cook: I love my publishing home in Colorado! Cris, Verne, and Kyle, you took a chance on a first-time author. Thank you for believing in the message. Tim Peterson, I remember leaving our first meeting at She Speaks hopeful of things to come. Thank you for all you did to bring my publishing wait to a beautiful end. Your kind heart was amplified in your edits. I can't wait (no pun intended) until our next project. Chriscynethia, Tim Close, Annette, Darren, and Lisa, you have done an amazing job of getting the word out about *Wait and See*. Now we get to *wait* and *see* how God will bless your talents and efforts. Amy and Jon, the cover is refreshing and inviting, bringing the title to life. Thank you for allowing me to be part of the process.

To Blythe Daniel: you are undoubtedly the greatest agent an author could ever dream of working with. You care about every aspect of your clients' success. You have talked me off the ledge more than once. I remember the day I called to say, "I'm done. I think I am supposed to read the Bible and teach RTW. I've had enough rejections. Just tell me we have exhausted all our options so I can lay this down." You wouldn't hear of it. You tenderly encouraged me to hang in there and *wait* for the right project and God's timing. Professionally, you have exceeded my expectations. Personally, you have blessed me beyond words. Thank you for never giving up on me and not allowing me to give up on me.

To Samantha: as the supereditor, your fingerprints are on every page of *Wait and See*. From our first breakfast meeting at Chick-fil-A, you believed in the message and caught the vision. Your support and encouragement both personally and professionally have meant more to me than you will ever know. You beautifully steward the gifts God

has given you. You have made me a better writer. It's an honor to call you editor and friend. I can't wait to get started on the next project!

To Meggy and Nicki: our writing retreats are full of memories that I will treasure forever. We have shared miles, meals, laughter, tears, and words—lots of words. You loved and supported me when I didn't think I could go on. Nicki, I celebrate this year with you as we release our first books. We did it! Meg, I can't wait to throw confetti at your book launch party. You have a message that needs to be heard. God's timing is perfect. Don't stop writing! I love you both dearly!

To Christie: you know my deepest secrets and love me anyway. I can't imagine, nor do I want to imagine, what my life might have been like had you chosen Beverly instead of me under the magnolia tree that day in preschool. You've kept me grounded through some dark days. I love our morning drive-time chats. Thank goodness for unlimited text and talk. Being your bestie is one of the greatest joys in my life. Thank you for waiting with me! I love you!

To my parents: Daddy, you are the greatest man I know. Without words, you taught me the importance of God's Word. At night, through the slats on the folding door, when you didn't know I was looking, I saw you reading your Bible. And every time I climbed into the cab of the truck, I noticed your small red New Testament on the dashboard. Thank you for showing me the way and for praying for me every day. I am who I am because of the example you and Momma set for me. Y'all set the bar high. I pray I can reach it.

Momma, I know I am the writer, but words fail me right now. I'll let God's Word speak for me. This is Proverbs 31:25–31 from The Living Bible (the green one I always saw in front of you at the breakfast table):

She is a woman of strength and dignity and has no fear of old age. When she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule for everything she says. She watches carefully all that goes on throughout her household and is never lazy. Her children stand and bless her; so does her husband. He praises her with these words: "There are many fine women in the world, but you are the best of them all!"

Charm can be deceptive and beauty doesn't last, but a woman who fears and reverences God shall be greatly praised. Praise her for the many fine things she does. These good deeds of hers shall bring her honor and recognition from people of importance.

Today I stand and bless you!

To Scott, Blaire, and my G-Man: being a wife and momma are my highest callings. My life is complete with the three of you by my side. You have each, in your own individual way, supported me through this wait. Griffin: thank you for making me laugh, such as when you replaced the cr me in the Oreo with toothpaste. You are my comic relief! Blaire: thank you for your editorial skills and encouragement. You read and reread chapters with a critical eye. I thank you for pushing me to excellence. You are brave to allow me to share your story. I know that God will bless you and encourage many through your words. Scott: you've always believed in me, even when I didn't believe in myself. Thank you for teaching me to dream and helping me reach high.

Introduction

Learning to Wait and See

A teacher. A wife. A mother. My little-girl heart dreamed of being all of these one day.

With chalk in hand and glasses resting on my nose, I practiced being a teacher with my stuffed animals. Carol Brady of *The Brady Bunch* taught me all I needed to know about being a wife. Caring for my dolls, as well as my years of babysitting, prepared me for motherhood. When I graduated from high school, I was ready to put my plans in motion.

Becoming a teacher requires four years of college. Graduated. Got a job. Dream came true.

Becoming a wife requires a fella. Found and dated him for two years. Got a husband. Dream came true.

Becoming a mother requires ... well, you know what it requires. No details are necessary. After two years of trying, no baby. Dream didn't come true.

My first two dreams came to pass just as *I* had planned. However, after the two years of failing to conceive, I wondered if I would ever sing the childhood rhyme, “First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes Wendy with a baby carriage.” Dream number three required me to wait and see.

You need to know something about me: I have never been a wait-and-see kind of girl. Deep down, I am a hurry-up, right-now, please-and-thank-you kind of gal. The word *patient* does not describe me—ask anyone who knows and loves me. So you can imagine how well I handled waiting to see my dream of motherhood come true. Waiting dominated my thoughts as it does for most of us when we’re waiting for the fulfillment of our hopes and dreams.

And you? Do you feel the tug of waiting for something but are scared to let yourself dream it will happen? Maybe you are waiting on a miracle. We have all been there—sometimes more often than we prefer. And the miracle requires something of us—waiting.

TIMING REALLY IS EVERYTHING

The desire to be a mother consumed me and my thoughts. *Why can’t I get pregnant? What is wrong with me? What have I done to warrant such punishment from God?* It seemed my girlfriends were getting pregnant with ease. That just didn’t seem fair, so I determined that God wasn’t fair.

I began to decline invitations to the multitude of blue-and-pink parties. My husband and I purposely socialized with friends who were not expecting or didn’t have children. However, avoiding pregnant friends did not ease my pain or subdue my longing.

What have I done to warrant such punishment from God?

Trying harder didn't help either. For two years, I ingested fertility pills, endured monthly injections, scheduled intimacy, and charted my basal body thermometer readings every morning at six o'clock. There wasn't a specialist or a test that could explain why I was unable to conceive.

Medically, I was doing everything right; spiritually, I was not. The wait exhausted my faith.

I resolved that God was mad at me, so I resolved to be mad at Him in return. Maybe you can relate? You still go to church on Sunday but have nothing to do with God on the other days ending in *y*. We have *our* plans and want *our* way. When things don't happen accordingly, we retaliate by ignoring God. I felt this way for over two years as the object of my wait became greater than the Person of my faith.

THE WAIT AND SEE

Eventually, I did conceive.

Had my faith matured and had I patiently waited for God's plan to unfold? Had I accepted a potentially childless future with grace? That would be a great big resounding *no!* I'd love to say I learned to trust God more, regularly devoured what I was learning in Bible study, and served others during the wait. Unfortunately, none of these are even close to the truth. When I became pregnant with my daughter, I was far from God and indifferent toward Him. His attempts to communicate with me through whispers from Scripture

and the sensing of His Spirit during worship songs at church were ignored. It is safe to say I wasn't on speaking terms with the Lord.

It's now been almost twenty years since that difficult season, and I've learned this key point: Waiting well looks forward to the *future* while staying present in the *present*. Waiting well means I remain open to God and allow Him to move me toward the future He has planned, in His time. I did not wait well.

You see, staying present in the present required me to be happy for others who were living my dream, even as I felt every ache of not having a child. Staying present meant accepting that questions would remain unanswered. Staying present should have involved my being content with the here and now and whatever the future held. But I could not bear to look forward to the future, because as far as I could see, my future was childless. And a childless future was not a future I wanted.

***Waiting well looks forward to the future
while staying present in the present.***

It took me a few years, but eventually I learned that the conception of my daughter had occurred in God's perfect timing. All of our "wait and see" experiences do. I envision Him running His finger across the kingdom calendar in December 1996, saying, "Yep. It's time." If we are willing to learn, the wait and see can be full of valuable lessons.

Maybe you are currently in a wait-and-see season that seems as though it will never end: waiting on a job, the return of a wayward child, your husband's salvation, a man to marry, or a job promotion. Or perhaps you have just come out of one waiting season and believe

you are headed into another. Waiting is hard. In the wait and see, it is imperative that we pause to consider the possibilities of God's design. From the depths of our ache, can we dare say to Him, "Show me what You have planned. I am willing to wait"?

When we ask God to show us His plan, we begin to align our heart with His heart. The door opens to experience God in deeper, more real ways. We still wait, but we deepen our knowledge of His character and goodness. We learn to trust that God acts on behalf of those who are willing to wait and see (Isa. 64:4) and that He does immeasurably more than we can think or imagine (Eph. 3:20). As we wait, we find peace in God's plans and hope in His pauses. Our focus moves from the object of our wait to the Person of our faith.

READY TO WAIT AND SEE

God has graciously brought you and me together to look at His faithfulness through the experiences of everyday women and the life of King David. We'll glean truth from David's life that will help us become women who wait well and see God's goodness in the pauses.

Can I encourage you before we get started? All of my dreams haven't come true, and plenty of my plans haven't come to fulfillment. In fact, I've been in a wait and see for over twenty years for something so dear to my heart that only God knows. Is every day a breeze? Honestly, no. But I can say after decades of waiting I've learned that some of our sweetest encounters with God are during our wait-and-see seasons.

You might be asking, "How can waiting bring about sweet encounters with God? It doesn't feel sweet when Sunday after

Sunday I load the children into the car for church and try to explain to them why Daddy doesn't go. 'Sweet' is not how I would describe the walk back to the treatment room. I don't feel closer to God as I stare at my empty checking account, waiting for the deposit of another unemployment check. How can waiting bring me close to God?"

These seasons are not passive times of inactivity, waiting around until our circumstances change. The wait and see is a time of action, excitement, and joy when we join God in His plans for our life (yes, even on the days we don't want to get out of bed and face our circumstances).

Let's join our God in the wait-and-see adventure. The adventure may take us to the place we have set our hopes on or a place we never expected, but we can have complete confidence to trust Him for an outcome that will bring us good and glorify Him.

As I studied Scripture in preparation for writing this book, my heart softened toward the Lord. I came to see His pauses as a safeguard and comfort. I came to view Him as a trustworthy advocate. He is for me. He is for you.

My prayer is that your heart will go through a similar transformation. The anxiety over your future will change to living peacefully in God's pauses as you wait for Him to fulfill His plans. Instead of living in the shadow of depression, doubt, and discouragement, you will bask in the light of hope, trust, and security. And rather than striving on your own, you will learn how to participate in God's work in the present. As we reach the end of our journey, you'll be prepared to confidently trust in God's plans for your future.

DIGGING DEEPER WITH DAVID

Every chapter in this book features a short, in-depth study of a psalm written by David. Each study will give us greater insight to David's wait. We will feel his heartbeat as he anxiously hides in the cave of Adullam. We will sense the rejection he feels when Saul turns on him. And, oh, how we will celebrate as he is finally crowned king of Israel.

Sometimes when I'm reading a book, I tend to skip over the study portion, determining to come back to it later. Do you ever do that? If so, I'd encourage you to pause before moving on to the next chapter. Take time to reflect on this section and answer the questions. You will find the scriptures uplifting and inspiring. Our ultimate goal is to focus on the Person of our faith more than the object of our wait. The "Digging Deeper with David" studies will guide us in doing just that.

I can't wait to study God's Word with you!

A SPECIAL FEATURE

As much as I love Bible study, perhaps my favorite feature of *Wait and See* is the active role you will have as we travel through the pages. *Wait and See* is a real-time reader-participatory book. You are more than a reader; you are a participant in a journey. You will do more than read chapters and answer Bible study questions.

Wait and See gives you the opportunity for real-life change as you apply God's truth to your real-life circumstances. You get to write the final chapter! Isn't that fun? Wait. Did panic just fill your

body? Are you already thinking of excuses like, “I’m not an author. I’ve never written anything. I’m a terrible speller.” Your only audience is you and God (and maybe a friend if you decide to share what God teaches you).

At the conclusion of each chapter is a section called This Principle in Your Pause. In it, I provide writing prompts that summarize the principles outlined in the chapter. After reading the prompt, you will turn to chapter 10, “Worth the Wait: My Story,” and respond.

Your participation starts now. “Worth the Wait” is full of blank lines waiting (no pun intended) to be filled with your story. There is plenty of room for misspelled words, incorrect grammar, and imperfection. It’s okay if the pages become tear stained as you pour out your heart to the God who loves you. He is ready to hear from you regarding your deepest desire, that one thing you have been waiting for.

You may adore the idea of writing in your book ... or you may dislike it! If journaling on the pages of this book doesn’t appeal to you, that’s no problem. Feel free to write your thoughts and answers in a notebook or type them on your computer or phone—whatever works for you.

Are you ready to join God in the pages of *Wait and See*?

THIS PRINCIPLE IN YOUR PAUSE

Turn to chapter 10, “Worth the Wait,” and write about a current wait that you are experiencing.

When the Wait Begins

Meet Ashley, Samantha, Dianna, Scott (my husband), and David. These are real people who waited on God. As we journey together, you will see how each individual applied the principles of waiting well.

When she was thirty years old, Ashley sensed God leading her to teach women the Bible. Thinking she had it all figured out and certain of God's desire for her life, Ashley jumped right in to preparing her Bible study class at church. She organized her materials, started the sign-up process, and counted on God to fill her classroom. Only one woman joined, and she later withdrew because of a scheduling conflict. Did Ashley hear God wrong?

God shows you His design for your life. He whets your appetite for all He has planned. Excitement overwhelms you as you sit on the edge of your seat. Then you wait.

Ashley waited.

In her early twenties, Samantha began to seriously ponder if it was the Lord's will for her to be married. She felt Him give her a green

light, so she prayed daily for her marriage and her husband—even though she didn't yet know him. She studied scriptures on marriage and about being a wife, and she gleaned wisdom from many married women. Year after year, Samantha continued hoping for a husband, trusting that her desires to marry were from the Lord. Yet year after year, she remained single.

God tucks a dream deep into your heart. You believe Him for the completion of this dream. You patiently do all the “right” things. Then you wait.

Samantha waited.

Dianna felt the call to full-time ministry. With her husband's job secure, she walked away from a \$75,000-a-year career to pursue her calling. Her *yes* to God was followed by the 2008 market crash, which devastated her family. Her husband, a builder of custom homes, lost his job. Losing their own home was just the start of some tough years of waiting and rebuilding. During the family's five moves, including a two-month stay in a hotel, Dianna contracted severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Things looked hopeful when the family found a wonderful home to rent—only to receive an eviction notice because the landlord had not paid the mortgage. Facing homelessness again, a disease, no health insurance, and no job, Dianna felt betrayed, helpless, abandoned, and hopeless.

The timing seems right. You step out in faith and say *yes* to God, then you lose your home and health.

Dianna waited.

Scott stood six foot three—a strong, healthy man. He and I were busy doing life and raising our two children. Everything seemed

picture perfect for our family. Without warning, the picture became blurred, literally, when the vision in Scott's left eye began to fail. He went from one specialist to another. Each doctor ordered new tests and, with the best intentions, prescribed new treatments. We prayed for healing. Our church family rallied around us and prayed. I invited my blog friends to pray. We had people all over the world asking God to heal Scott's eye. Yet after eighteen months, there was still no definitive diagnosis or change in Scott's condition.

You pray. You anoint with oil. You pray some more. Then you wait.
We waited.

Jesse was a farmer and breeder in Bethlehem. David was the youngest of his eight sons, who worked the land with their father. Can you imagine if any hopes or dreams were left for you when you're the youngest of eight?

The prophet Samuel called on Jesse to anoint one of his sons as the next king of Israel. Jesse brought each son one by one to Samuel. After meeting the boys, Samuel still had not heard God's voice of confirmation. The prophet asked Jesse if he had any more sons. Imagine Jesse's internal response: *Um, this isn't my hope or plans for David. He's just a shepherd boy. He deserves to stay home.* Jesse answered truthfully and called David from the pasture.

Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one."

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah. (1 Sam. 16:12–13)

I can only imagine what might have been going on inside of David's mind (and Jesse's). David did not dream of being king. He thought his life's path had already been chosen for him: he would be a farmer and breeder, just like his father and brothers. But God's plan for David's life was different. Samuel appointed and anointed David king of Israel, but David wouldn't fulfill that position for many years.

David waited.

Do you see yourself somewhere between the lines of these waiting stories? Maybe you are praying for a husband or waiting for God's plan for your life to come to fruition. Perhaps your life has fallen into place just as God revealed but something or someone is blocking the way toward what you really hope for. So you wait, hope, believe, and yet sometimes second-guess the plan.

*The wait is more about experiencing
God than enduring the delay.*

WANTING AND WAITING

I don't know anyone who likes to wait. Life in our technologically advanced world has taught us that waiting does not have to be an option. Let's face it—within seconds of posting to Instagram and Facebook, everyone can see pictures of your lunch with your best friend.

Snapchat allows us to instantly picture chat with anyone, anywhere, anytime. Text messaging is faster than a telephone call, and email is quicker than the postal service. Our dinner can be paid for, cooked, and placed in our hands in a matter of minutes without us

even leaving our car. Yes, the message we've received from our have-it-your-way world is "You don't have to wait." But, friend, we have been deceived.

We may want our food served quickly; however, in waiting we are more likely to be served healthier food that's better for us. I am sure at one time or another we all have burned with an urgency to express our thoughts in an email, text message, or Facebook update concerning something that has made us angry. On the other hand, if we push through the want with a timely wait, we have the opportunity to thoughtfully respond so others will see Christ in us. Can we collectively agree things usually turn out better when we wait?

When I was young, my family had one television. My brother and I had to take turns watching our favorite television shows. This got old fast, so I decided it would be nice for me to have my very own television in my bedroom. I took this bright idea to my parents. To my surprise, they said yes, but they wisely turned my want into a wait.

Instead of buying the television for me, they made me earn the money. After months of babysitting and doing extra chores, I finally saved the eighty-nine dollars needed to purchase the thirteen-inch, black-and-white set. While sitting on *my* bed, watching *my* favorite shows, without my older brother pestering me, I determined that small television I had wanted so much to be worth the wait.

As adults, the value of what we wait for is far greater than the cost of a black-and-white television. We wait for the salvation of our loved one, the healing of our friend, the end of our own long-term health issue, deliverance from addiction, a positive result on a pregnancy test, or the end of unemployment. The value of what we wait for is so great that we can easily become derailed from life.

These things are important to pray about, for sure. But when they become all consuming, their value is magnified—especially the longer we wait. Some carry greater weight than we originally thought, while some carry less. As the days, months, and years pass, we can put more energy, effort, prayer, conversations, and, yes, sometimes manipulation and guilt trips into making these things come to pass. We easily become derailed, sacrificing our time with the Lord, relationships with loved ones, and enjoyment of life in general. When we do, we become bankrupt: spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and sometimes even financially. When we value the things we wait on more than we value the commands of the Lord—not to worry, to accept His peace, to live by faith—we lose sight of what’s really important: our relationship with God. Without realizing it, we exchange the Person of our faith for the object of our wait.

THE PERSON OF OUR FAITH

Too often, we consult the Person of our faith (God) only after we have exhausted our efforts to push through our wait on our own. If we want to be women who wait well, we will invite God to be part of the process at the beginning, setting our focus on the Lord, not that for which we are waiting. In Scripture, we see the prophet Isaiah helped the Israelites turn their focus on God with a promise. A woman waiting can adjust the lens of her focus with the same truth.

Since ancient times no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,

no eye has seen any God besides you,
who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.
(Isa. 64:4)

This invitation is an act of surrender and does not deemphasize the worth of her husband's salvation, a friend's healing, or anything else she's waiting on. The invitation directs the lens of her hopes, desires, and dreams to her great God, rather than the object of her wait.

What encouraging words! God is speaking to His people concerning their restoration after seventy years of captivity in Babylon. Although this verse is about Israel's return to Jerusalem, we can find ourselves in the reference to "those who wait." We share in the hope that no ear has perceived, no eye has seen. That means we are the benefactors of something that no one has ever seen or heard when we wait on God. Now that is shoutin' worthy news right there (insert your own shouts and amens here)!

The news gets better as we find the word *prepared* used in the King James Version of Isaiah 64:4, "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath *prepared* for him that waiteth for him." "Prepared" is the Hebrew word *asah*, which means "to do" or "make" in the broadest sense and widest application. "Those who wait" have access to unlimited and mind-blowing futures when they are willing to wait on God to work on their behalf. That bears repeating: in the broadest sense and widest application. If you weren't shoutin' before, you should be now! This truth is the first of many we'll discover that will change our perspective about waiting.

***We all know the unlimited, mind-blowing lengths
that God went to in creating our world.***

As my son would say, “There’s always a catch.” The unlimited and mind-blowing future God has for us has a prerequisite: we are required to wait.

“Wait” in Isaiah 64:4 is the Hebrew word *khaw-kaw*. God teaches us through the word *khaw-kaw* to tarry for Him to act on our behalf. This means “those who wait” are to delay in acting or starting anything. Waiters are to linger where they are, doing what they know to do until they receive instructions.

Words such as *delay* and *linger* don’t sit well in the spirit of a girl like me who prefers to move, take action, and make things happen. However, as we delay and linger, we can know for certain the future we move toward is from the hand of God, not by means of manipulation or anything we can add to the equation. What a relief! We don’t have to do anything to get what only God wants to bring us. Isn’t that awesome to remember?

The Hebrew word *khaw-kaw* helps us understand that waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under His command. Second, it means readiness for any new command that may come: we pray for His direction. Third, waiting involves the ability to do nothing until the command is given.¹ Honestly, all of this sounds well and good on paper, but we all know waiting isn’t easy and waiting well is even more difficult. As our wait begins, our mind conjures up all manner of fallacies and misunderstandings. But equipping ourselves

with these truths will empower us to do what seems impossible—to wait well.

WAITING MISCONCEPTIONS

When times get hard and the wait seems too long, we begin to doubt God as well as the unlimited and mind-blowing future He has planned for us. We begin to question God: *Did I hear You correctly? Do You see what I am going through? Why does this have to be so hard?* We blame God because our circumstances seem more difficult than before we invited Him into our wait. It is during these times that we have to fight to maintain our focus on the Person of our faith rather than the object of wait or distracting circumstances that surround us. One way to do this is through prayer.

The Lord longs for us to reach out to Him and ask for help, clarity, and direction. See what James 1:5–8 says: “If you don’t know what you’re doing, pray to the Father. He loves to help. You’ll get his help, and won’t be condescended to when you ask for it. Ask boldly, believingly, without a second thought. People who ‘worry their prayers’ are like wind-whipped waves. Don’t think you’re going to get anything from the Master that way, adrift at sea, keeping all your options open” (THE MESSAGE). In this verse, James clearly tells us we are to ask our Father for what we need. James says God *loves* to help. I certainly like the sound of that—how about you?

Let’s keep this verse handy as we revisit and expand on the wait-and-see stories (of Ashley, Samantha, Dianna, Scott, and David) from earlier in the chapter to identify common misconceptions “those who wait” encounter. Recognizing these misconceptions will

empower us to wait well, stay present in the present, and experience God in our delay. Notice how each person asked for and experienced God's help along the way.

Ashley sensed God moving her toward teaching a Bible study. She prepared and did everything necessary to give the class a great start. But all her efforts seemingly went unnoticed and were in vain. When it was time for the class to start, she didn't have any students to teach.

Misconception #1: If I am waiting, I must not have heard God correctly. Ashley learned that waiting doesn't necessarily mean you heard God incorrectly. Ashley says, "We give up too easily because we don't see what we want to see when we want to see it."

We can redirect the negative thoughts we often receive by revisiting the moments when we sensed the Lord's nudging. Reliving the moments of pure excitement we experienced when we felt the prodding of His Spirit will extinguish uncertainty that tries to creep in to steal our joy. We may have to travel down memory lane many times during our wait. Ashley had to make the trip several times throughout her ten-year pause, asking for God's clarity and assurance.

This is why it is so important to invite God into our wait from the very beginning, instead of after we have tried everything we know to make things happen. As we spend time with Him and in His Word, we gain confidence in His plans. A quick visit to the past fills us with the peace we need to make it through the pause. Waiting well teaches us to trust His delays rather than doubt His ways.

Misconception #2: If I am waiting, I must desire something not in God's will for my life. Samantha desired to be married. She knew God ordained and approved marriage, but did He want *her*

to be married? There are plenty of verses in the Bible about marriage, relationships, and how to be a loving spouse. Yet Samantha also knew the verses in which Paul clearly states that some people are called to remain single. When passages seemingly conflict, it can be difficult to determine God's will for your life.

Samantha asked her family and several close friends to pray for her. She committed to taking each step she felt God asked of her—whether that was toward meeting her future spouse or remaining single.

*We need to prepare in the pauses so we're
ready to embrace God's plans.*

Misconception #3: If I am waiting, I must not be praying enough. Day after day, Dianna prayed and sought the Lord. Many days, she ate only one meal so her family could have all the food they needed. She watched her husband take odd jobs here and there just to make ends meet. Dianna spent weekends at the laundromat because she did not have a washer or a dryer. She fought the spirit of discouragement on her knees.

She knew in her heart God would supply their needs, but she had to keep telling her head. Dianna faithfully followed the teaching of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Never stop praying” (NLT). Her wait didn't end because she prayed, but her resolve strengthened, helping her to face each day.

Misconception #4: If I am waiting, I must not have enough faith. This was the lie I believed as we agonized over Scott's declining health. His faith is quiet and personal. As we lived out this mystery, I

watched his discreet faith become deathly silent. His attitude toward prayer and the things of God grew cynical.

While Scott's faith is quiet, mine is vocal. When I wasn't serving or teaching at church, I was leading women's conferences and writing devotions and book contributions. My prayer life and Bible study were more than routine. Each morning, I had, and still have, a standing appointment with the Lord. Certainly I was doing enough work for the kingdom to get God's attention concerning Scott's health. All of this surely proved my faith was strong enough for the two of us and was worthy of a little healing.

What was I doing wrong? Was God holding my past against me? Had I not done enough to earn His favor? Sometimes waiting has less to do with the strength of your faith and more to do with the perfection of God's timing.

Here's the thing—I *should* have prayed and read my Bible, but not to work my way back into God's good graces. He is a gracious and merciful God. My praying and Scripture reading do not make Him more gracious. Somewhere along the way, I'd convinced myself otherwise. God makes us wait at times so we can glean valuable lessons. But He never does so out of spite. This is something David taught me as I continued to wait for God to heal my husband.

Misconception #5: If I am waiting, I must not be working hard enough. We will look further into David's wait from the pasture to the palace in the upcoming chapters, but I want to remind you now of a significant point concerning David's kingship. David did not ask to be king. David did not dream of being king. He wasn't born into a royal family line from which he would naturally

be appointed king. God chose David to be king. It is possible you and I could find ourselves waiting for something we never desired but God desires for us. He knows better than we do what we need to fulfill what He's called us to do.

*Waiting well pushes through the pause
by doing what we know to do.*

David had twenty years to work through his wait. Boy, did he work! Read his psalms to feel the agony of his wait as he cried out to God, "How long?" David worked hard, obeyed God, and ran from an enemy. His wait wasn't easy, but he pushed through the difficulties by doing what he knew to do: tend sheep, serve faithfully, and obey God patiently.

In each circumstance, these individuals sought God through prayer. They asked hard questions when they didn't understand His ways. We see that God may not have ended their waits, but He responded with loving faithfulness to all their needs.

FASTPASS, PLEASE

A few years ago, our family took a vacation to *the place where dreams come true*, Disney World. To prepare for the trip, I read websites and blogs and interviewed Disney World experts (aka, friends who call Disney World their favorite place on earth).

In my research, I discovered something called a FastPass, which is a printable ticket that gives you access to the most popular rides without having to wait in long lines. You get a ticket ahead of time,

allowing you to go to the front of the line at an appointed time. It is ideal for girls like me who don't like to wait.

Each evening, my family would map out our ride plan. When the park opened the next morning, we would rush (notice that we rushed) to the FastPass machine. Our ride plan could not have worked out any better, but of course we were at Disney World, where dreams come true.

Real life, though an adventure, is far from Disney World's Adventureland. Too often, we want a FastPass straight through God's pauses to move directly to His plan. God seldom hands out passes so you can avoid the wait and skip to the front of the line. That's not a bad thing, as painful as it is at the time. A rush through the wait has the potential to stunt our spiritual growth and dull our senses to what God wants us to learn as a result of our wait. As the apostle James tells us:

Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way. (1:2-4 THE MESSAGE)

James advises those who follow Jesus not to take the FastPass through tests and challenges. He says that a pause will actually work in our favor. Our faith will mature, and we will become well-developed women of God, ready for all the good works He

has prepared for us. God is the creator of time. We can trust His pauses to be purposeful and perfectly arranged. God will make the most of our pause, and we should too.

As “those who wait,” we find ourselves in great company. Noah waited 120 years for the flood. Abraham and Sarah waited nearly a hundred years to become parents. Jesus waited thirty years to start His public ministry. These and countless others waited on God and in the wait experienced Him in remarkable and miraculous ways.

I know what you are thinking: *But he was Noah. They were Abraham and Sarah. And He was Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God. They are all in the Bible.* Rest assured, they are indeed all in the Bible, but not because of their perfection in waiting. All had moments when they questioned God. Not one was superhuman. They were men and women like you and me, but each was willing to wait and do the work necessary for God’s plan to come to fulfillment.

Waiting isn’t meant to be a grueling process. What if we view it as a pause or an interlude, a place we can experience the peace of God while He works in us so He can work through us? He is actively working while we wait—a promise that never disappoints in the end—and that work sometimes gets personal.

THIS PRINCIPLE IN THEIR PAUSE

Ashley easily became derailed from everyday life as she hurried to make sure everything was “just right” for her Bible study. She was sure of God’s tug on her heart to teach and a bit confused when

the class had to be canceled, but she realized she had rushed rather than rested in God's timing.

Samantha could have become entangled by the everyone-is-getting-married season of life. She asked herself the hard questions, prayed, and invited others to pray for her also. Samantha fought to keep the Person of her faith front and center in her wait.

Dianna waited for God to provide as she prayed. He proved faithful Jesus's words in Matthew 6:11, "Give us today our daily bread." Each day, her family had what they needed. She was fervent in her prayers, so why was God allowing things to be so hard? She wasn't opposed to the testing of her faith, but it seemed God was tightening the screws, and at times seemed unfair.

Our story: We started this health journey hopeful. *Scott will go to the doctor, get some medicine, and everything will be fine.* Our hope diminished quickly when the medicines were ineffective and Scott's condition worsened. Scott spent the better part of the year lost in the maze of various doctors who prescribed various medications. The ride left us weary and certain of one thing: our future was uncertain.

THIS PRINCIPLE IN YOUR PAUSE

Now it's your turn. Use the "Worth the Wait" pages in chapter 10 to examine your current wait in light of the lessons outlined in this chapter. Here are some prompts to help you get started:

Do I really believe that God is good and His blessings are not dependent on my "works"?

In what ways am I rushing through my wait? What *misconception* resonates most with me?

Misconception #1: I must not have heard God correctly.

Misconception #2: I must desire something not in God's will for my life.

Misconception #3: I must not be praying enough.

Misconception #4: I must not have enough faith.

Misconception #5: I must not be working hard enough.

Digging Deeper with David: Psalm 13

Read Psalm 13.

A wait doesn't sound terribly awful in the beginning. But as time passes, we become antsy and even question God about the length of our wait.

In the Principle in Your Pause section for the introduction, I asked you to write details about your current wait, including how long you have been waiting. Can we all agree that these are difficult seasons? Our emotions are up, down, and all around like an amusement park roller coaster. Spiritually speaking, we trust God one day and doubt Him the next. The "how longs" can even wear us down physically. This is where we find David.

It's undetermined when David wrote Psalm 13, but his words give us a snapshot of his circumstances. David, living in a *how long* season, was at his wit's end.

How many times did David ask God "how long"? _____

Can you hear the desperation in David's voice? Read verses 1–2 out loud for greater impact. I love that David asked these questions. Because he asked, you and I can feel the freedom to ask too.

LIVING "HOW LONG"

When I was a little girl, my daddy had a talk with my brother and me. "One day your momma will not be able to brush her hair and she will

need help getting dressed. Her fingers will become crooked, making it difficult to do everyday, simple things. She has a disease called arthritis.” I couldn’t imagine this ever being a reality. My momma was a strong woman who loved the Lord and could do anything. And I knew God. He healed. And He would heal my momma. So at eight years old, I began to faithfully pray and believe that God would indeed heal my mother.

Like David, I tried to depend on God but sometimes cried out for answers. I was sure He could give this arthritis to someone else. There weren’t immediate answers to my questions and cries, but leaning on God’s strength made the “how long” bearable and my young faith stronger.

As our heavenly Father, God expects us to cry out to Him. He longs to lift the burden of our how long. The burden is lifted when we cast our cares and concerns on Him.

Read 1 Peter 5:7.

Why should we cast our cares on God? _____

What cares and anxieties of your current wait can you cast on God?

PRAYING IN "HOW LONG"

As the years passed, I never stopped praying for God to heal my mother. Praying made my young faith strong. Sadly, the longer I

waited, the less I prayed. I remember being anxious, wondering why He was taking so long. Even through my anxiousness and wondering, it never occurred to me that He would choose not to heal her.

Despite his anxious heart, David's spiritual response to pray superseded his natural instinct to doubt. He directed his fretful and question-filled thoughts to God. David's natural instinct had become spiritual. He knew praying would, in time, bring peace of mind.

Read Philippians 4:6–7.

In what types of situations should we pray? What happens when we pray?

Through prayer, our natural instinct becomes spiritual. This transformation of thinking and responding enables us to dwell in our “how long” with hope for deliverance. Our response to this new hope is the impulse to praise. Yes, you can praise God in a season of waiting, no matter how long.

PRAISING IN "HOW LONG"

In just a few short verses, David's prayer changes from *how long* to *hallelujah*. Through prayer, David remembered God's past faithfulness, encouraging him to trust in God's future provision. Had his situation changed? Had his enemy suddenly decided to

surrender? No. David was not delivered from the situation, but he was released from its despair. His anxiety was replaced with a new song of praise.

Read Psalm 40:3.

Who provided David with a new song? _____

As we pray, God will not only guard our mind and heart with peace, but He will also put a hymn of praise on our lips. Peace and praise produce endurance and unity with God, making a waiting period worthy of praise.

Are you living in the unbearable days of “how long”? Maybe like David you feel God has abandoned you. Praying and praising will not only make the long wait bearable, but they will also cause your faith to flourish. Your relationship with God will grow stronger even if your situation doesn’t change.

Write verse 5 in the space below. Take a moment to read it aloud as a prayer to God.

We can trust God in our “how long” waiting period. He will sustain us until He is ready to deliver us. Oh, and we can be confident that our deliverance will be perfectly timed.